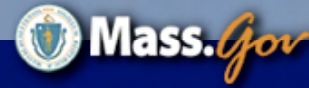


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BERT 2.1 User Guide

Basic Electronic Reporting Tool BERT 2.1 User Guide

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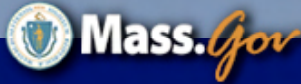
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BERT 2.1 User Guide

PART 1

Getting started

[1.1 Introduction](#)

1.1 Introduction

The MTRS is pleased to announce the third release of our Basic Electronic Reporting Tool (BERT 2.1), a reporting application that the MTRS has created to assist school districts with monthly retirement deduction reporting.

What's new? The new version of BERT works almost exactly like the previous version. It has all the functionality of the previous version, plus improvements that will enable you to test your reports for additional common errors and then make corrections easily. We have also added new position codes and pay schedules in response to input from our employers. **We strongly encourage all school districts to download BERT 2.1 and to use the application to assist in verifying the accuracy of deduction report data before you submit the report files to the MTRS for processing.**

In the spring of 2010, the MTRS plans to implement a secure, web-based deduction reporting application that will involve an entirely new method of submitting your employees' retirement contributions and data. The new system will feature new data validations that are very similar to those being introduced in BERT 2.1. Accordingly, in addition to the existing advantages of using BERT, this new version of BERT will prepare those who submit deduction reports for the requirements of the new system.

All school districts, including those that are using BERT 2.1 to compile reports, are still required to mail their files to the MTRS lockbox on a diskette or CD each month along with the deduction check and the [MTRS Retirement Deduction Submittal Sheet](#) (pdf,1 page).

Note

- The MTRS recommends that you keep electronic copies of your deduction reports for at least 24 months in case there is a need to re-evaluate or reproduce the data.
- The BERT 2.1 application is a reporting tool and by providing BERT, the MTRS does not assume any responsibility for the accuracy of your data. Please be careful when entering data and make sure to verify the accuracy of your input.

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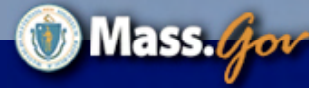
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BERT 2.1 User Guide

PART 2

Installation

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2.1 System requirements

BERT 2.1 is a Microsoft Access application. In order to run BERT, you must either have Microsoft Access Runtime or Microsoft Access 2000 or later, installed on your PC. Information on obtaining and downloading Access Runtime for free are located in section 2.2 below.

If you have any problems installing BERT 2.1, or if you have any questions about using the program, please do one of the following:

- contact your district's [MTRS Employer Service Representative](#) by phone or e-mail;
- call the MTRS Employer Services helpline at 617-679-6895; or,
- send an e-mail to bertsupport@trb.state.ma.us.

Note to Macintosh users

Since MS Access is not available in a Mac-compatible version; you will not be able to use BERT unless you have both the PC-version of Access Runtime *and* Virtual PC installed on your Mac.

2.2 Access Runtime for users who do not have MS Access

If you do not have Microsoft Access installed on your PC, the MTRS has a solution that will allow you to use BERT without purchasing MS Access. Microsoft Office Access Runtime is a free application that enables you to use Access even if you do not have the full version of Access installed on your computer, and is available for downloading via [Access Runtime](#) on our website.

Below is a set of step-by-step instructions to walk you through installing Access Runtime. If your district has an IT specialist, you may want to ask him or her to install this for you. If you need assistance, please contact your Employer Services Representative. We can either answer your questions or schedule a time to help you with the installation.

1. Go to the Employers page of the MTRS website, click on **Basic Electronic Reporting Tool (BERT)**. This will link you to the BERT page; click on **DOWNLOAD: Access Runtime**.

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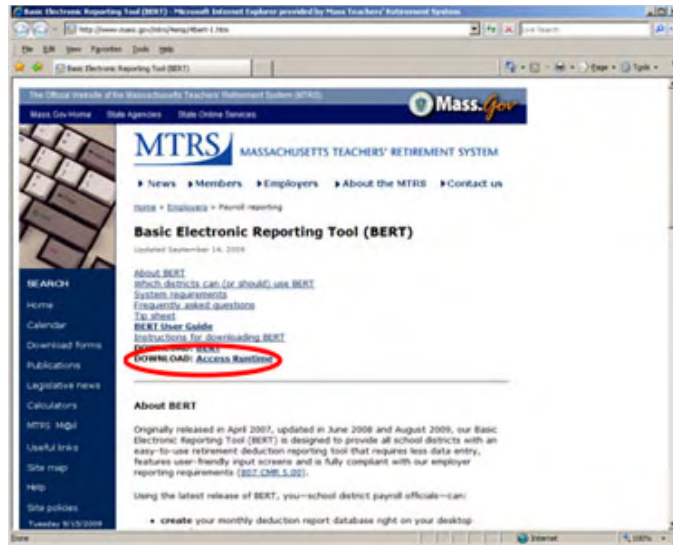
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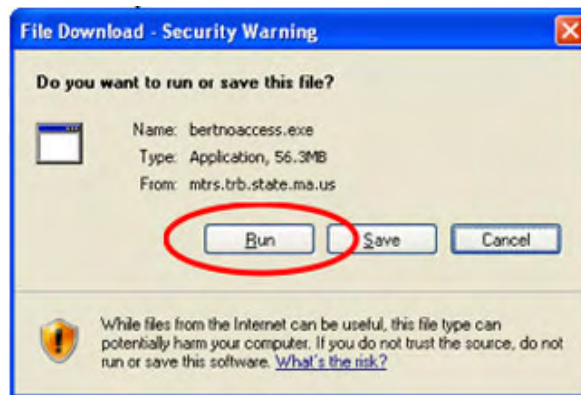
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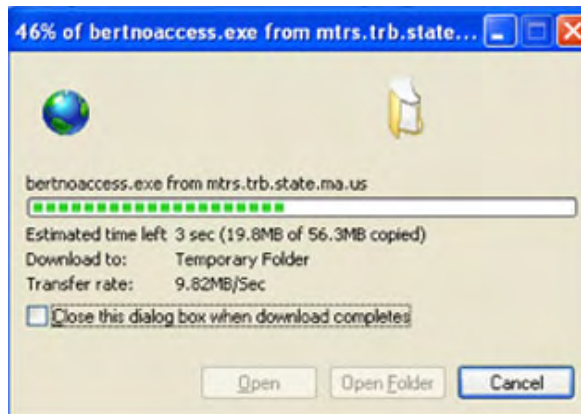
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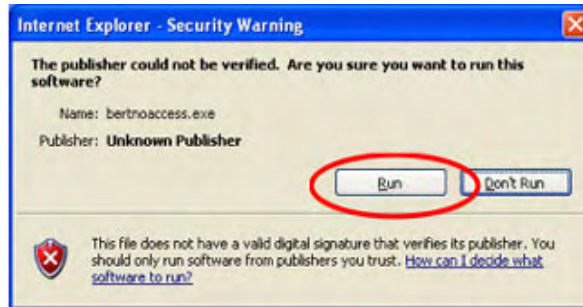
- After you have clicked **Access Runtime**, a screen will pop-up asking if you want to Run the installation from our server or Save it locally. Please choose **Run** to run it directly from our server and avoid any possible compatibility or license issues with the version of WinZip that you may have installed on your PC.



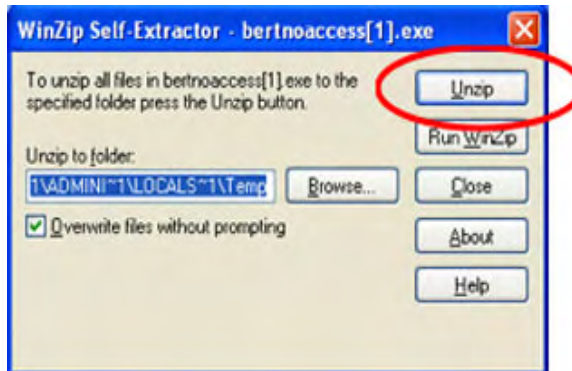
- Once you have clicked **Run**, a progress bar like this should appear.



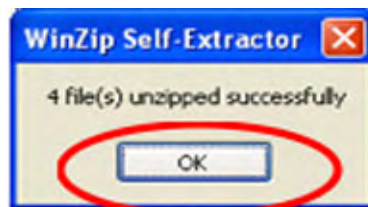
- If you get a warning that the state website has an unpublished certificate, please don't be alarmed. Access Runtime is installed on a secure server and is safe. Proceed by choosing **Run** again.



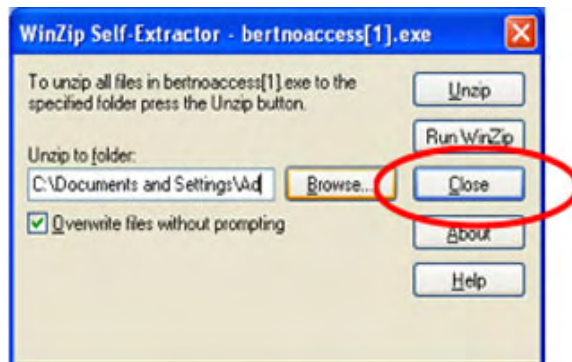
5. The WinZip Self-Extractor should open in the view below. Before you unzip the BERT file, choose the location where you want to save the Access Runtime installation program. To choose a new location, hit the Browse button and a window will appear and you can choose from several locations. We recommend saving the installation program on your desktop for easy post-installation disposal. Once you have selected where you want to save your installation program, choose **Unzip**.



6. A pop-up message should appear confirming that your files have been successfully unzipped. Click **OK**.



7. When you click **OK**, you will return to the extractor menu. Choose **Close** to exit this menu.

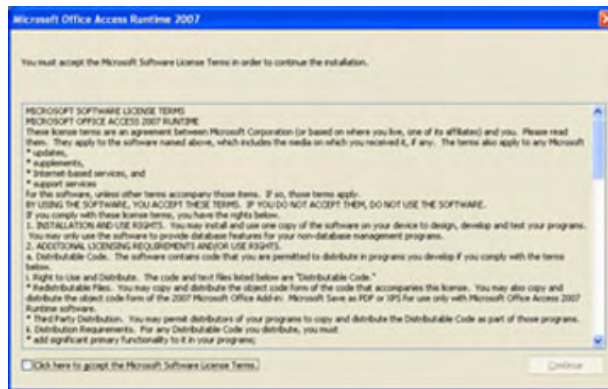


8. These three icons should appear on your desktop. To install Access Runtime, click on the Access Runtime icon and it will install itself on your computer. We will address using the other two icons later in this section.

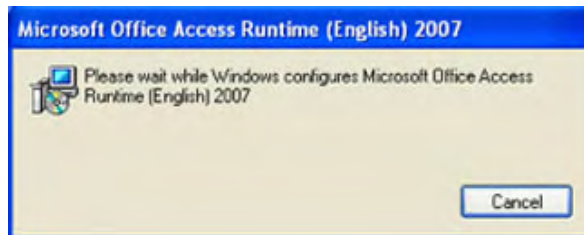


9. Access Runtime is a free program designed by Microsoft in order to enable the use of Access applications by users who do not have the full version of Access. To use Microsoft's software, you will have to accept their user agreement. Again, Access Runtime is a free program, not a promotional trial; you will not receive a message, after some period of time, that you need to purchase the application.

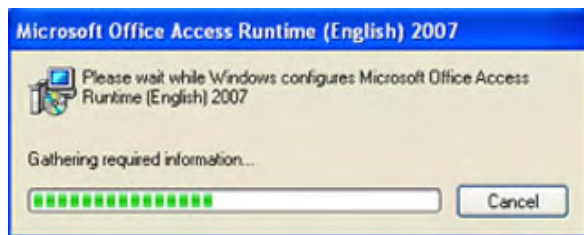
Use the scroll bar on the right to read through the license agreement and, if you accept the terms, check the box in the bottom left corner.



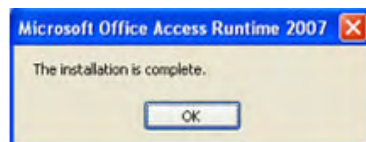
10. Once you have agreed to Microsoft's terms, you will see this dialog box and the installation will begin.



11. The installation time depends on your download speed. In several tests, the MTRS was able to download Access Runtime in an average time of less than three minutes.



12. When the installation is complete, this confirmation message will appear. Click **OK**.



13. After Access Runtime is installed, you may notice that your BERT program icon will change from the icon on the left to the icon on the right. This is normal.



14. After Access Runtime has been installed, you will still have two “registry” icons on your desktop. Click on each icon once, then click **OK**. These two registry entries will install in seconds and will make BERT easier to use.



15. When you have run all three of these installation programs (Access Runtime, BERTRegInstallUpload, BERTRegInstallSecurity), you can remove the icons from your desktop or drag them to your recycling bin.



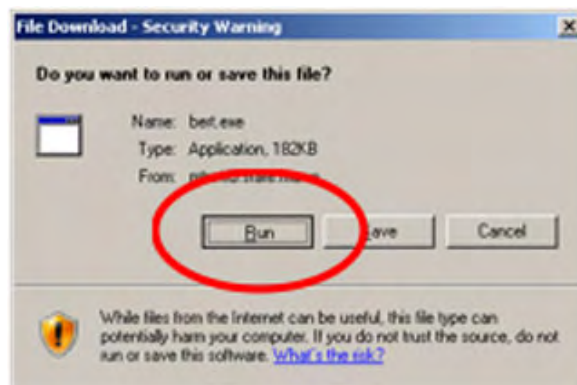
2.3 Installing BERT 2.1

To install BERT 2.1, please follow the nine steps illustrated below. (Note: The following nine steps may vary slightly depending on your Windows settings or the versions of Windows and WinZip software you are using. See [section 2.1](#) for our contact information if you need assistance installing BERT 2.1.)

1. On the Employers page of the MTRS website, click on **Basic Electronic Reporting Tool (BERT)**. This will link you to the BERT page; click on **DOWNLOAD: BERT**.



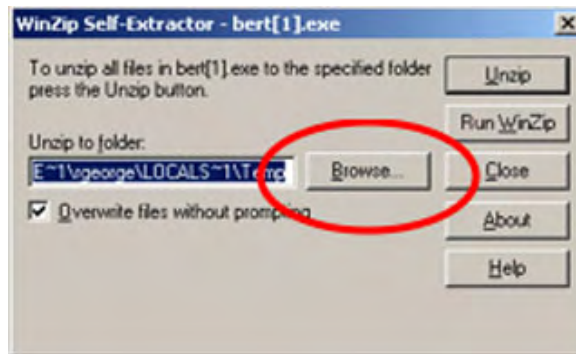
2. BERT's installation program is an executable file so you may receive a warning from your security software. When this occurs click **Run** to continue the installation process.



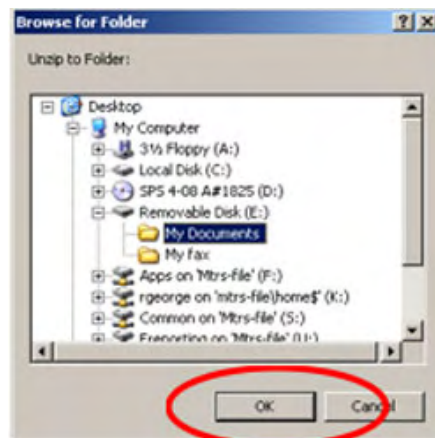
3. Some security programs may give you a second warning, but please be assured that BERT 2.1 is a safe program to install. If this message appears, click **Run** again.



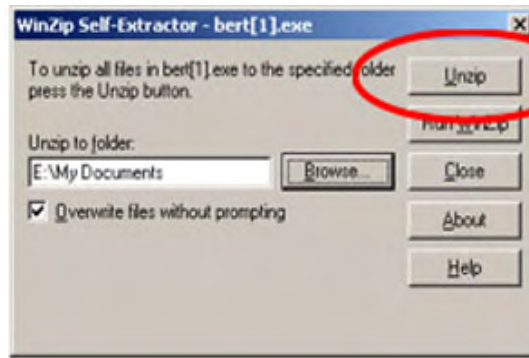
4. When BERT 2.1's self-extracting message box appears, click the **Browse...** button to select the network folder in which you would like to install BERT 2.1. We recommend that you save your file on a secure network folder whenever possible. This will ensure that your data will be safe and will enable your IT department to back up your files.



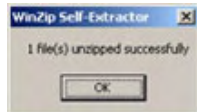
5. A window will then appear, allowing you to choose the network drive on which you want to save BERT 2.1. The MTRS recommends that you save your file on a secure network folder when possible so your data will be safe and can be backed up by your IT department. Click **OK**.



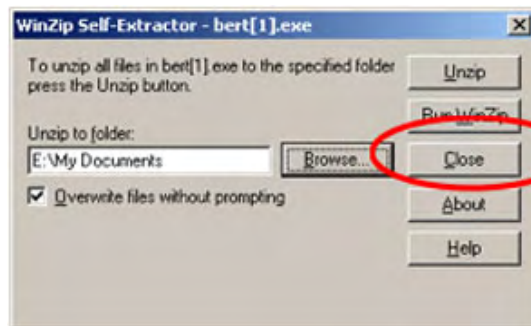
6. Once you have selected a network drive, click on **Unzip** to install BERT 2.1 on the drive you selected.



7. When BERT 2.1 has been successfully installed, you should receive a confirmation message box similar to the message below. Click **OK**.



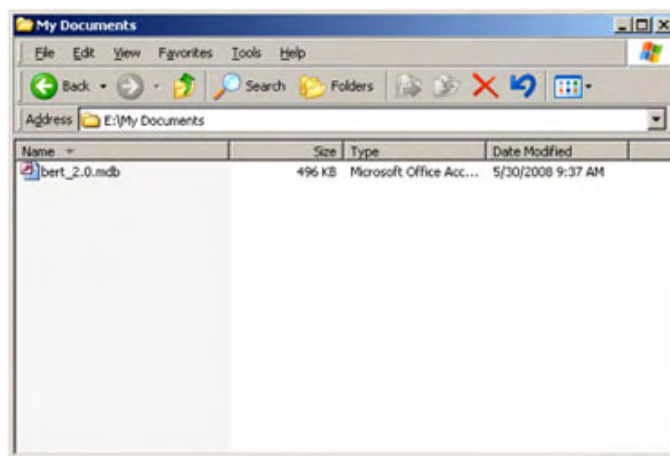
8. Now that BERT 2.1 has been installed, exit the installer by clicking **Close** on the Self-Extractor.



9. Next, navigate to the network drive where you installed BERT 2.1 in order to use it.

Tech tip:

To create a shortcut to the BERT 2.1 program on your desktop, right-click on the program in this view and choose "Send to..." then "Desktop (Shortcut)".



This is what you should see when you open BERT 2.1.

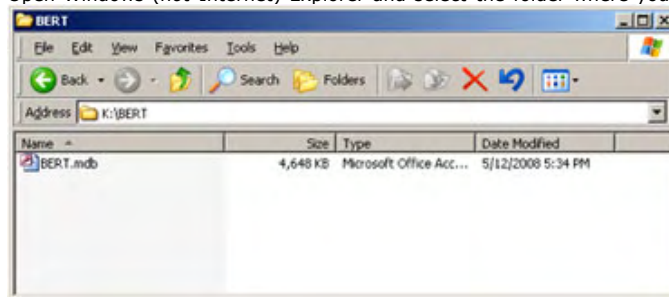
Thank you for installing BERT 2.1. If you have any questions about installation or use, please do not hesitate to contact your assigned [MTRS Employer Services representative](#).



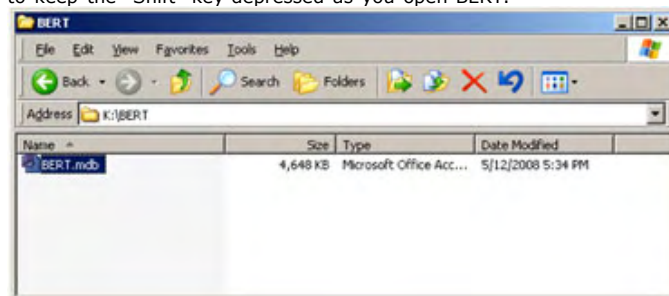
2.4 Preventing nuisance pop-up messages in Access 2000–Access 2006

Access will cause a series of pop-up messages to appear when you are using BERT. To avoid these recurring messages every time you run the program, follow these steps:

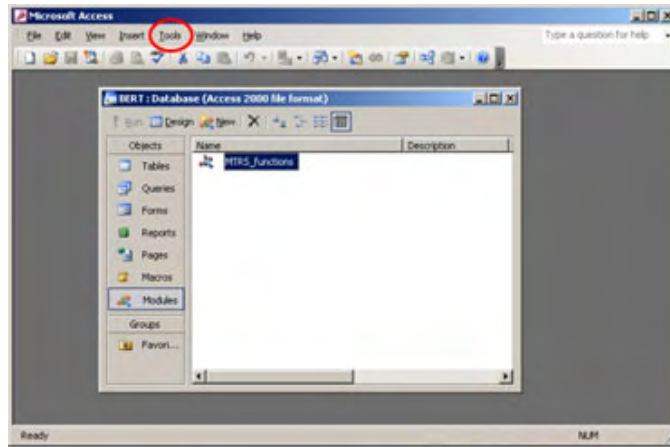
1. Open Windows (*not* Internet) Explorer and select the folder where you have stored BERT 2.1.



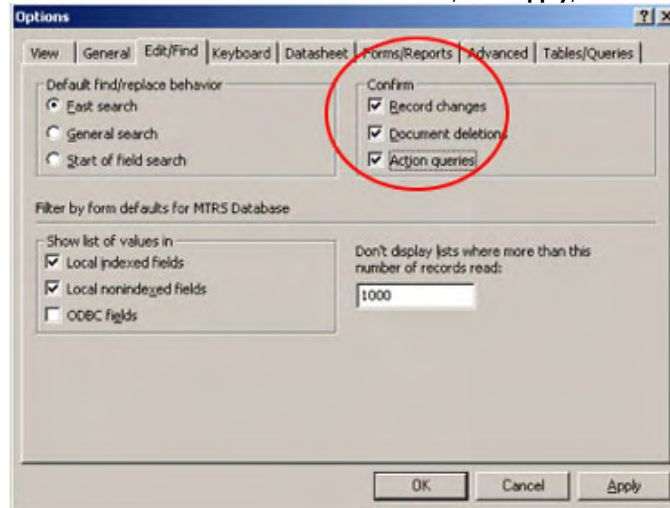
2. When you are in the folder, use the up and down arrow keys to highlight BERT in the folder. Next, click on the BERT program while holding the "Shift" key. If you get a security warning, make sure to keep the "Shift" key depressed as you open BERT.



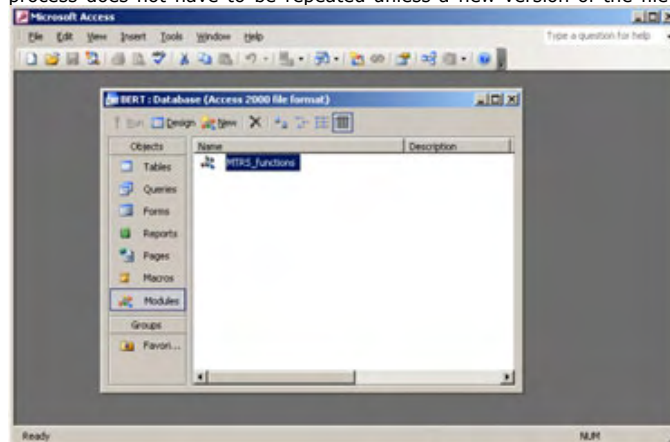
3. The BERT tool should open in a view similar to this. Next, click the **Tools** option in the menu bar at the top of the page and select **Options** from the drop-down list.



4. The **Options** menu is reproduced below. Select the **Edit/Find** tab and uncheck the boxes in the **Confirm** section circled in the illustration. Next, click **Apply**, then click **OK**.



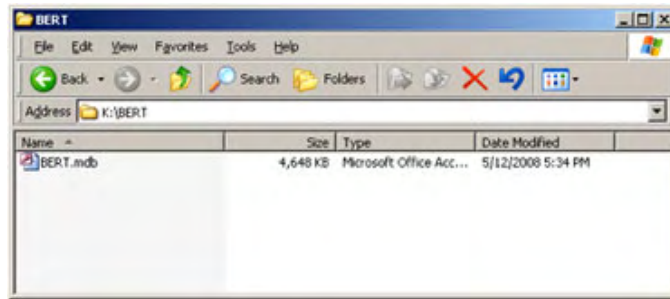
5. When the screen below appears, close by clicking on the "x" mark in the Database box. This process does not have to be repeated unless a new version of the file is downloaded.



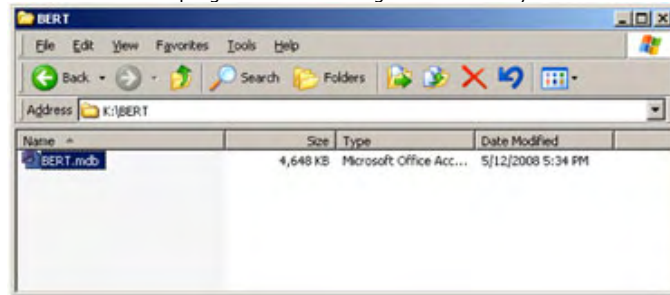
2.5 Preventing nuisance pop-up messages in Access 2007 or later

Access will cause a series of pop-up messages to appear when you are using BERT. If you have a later version of Access, follow these steps to avoid these recurring messages when you run the program:

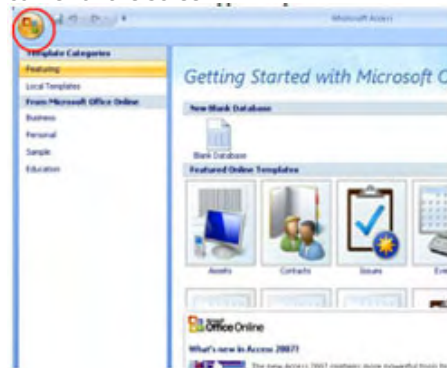
1. Open Windows (*not* Internet) Explorer and select the folder where you have stored BERT 2.1.



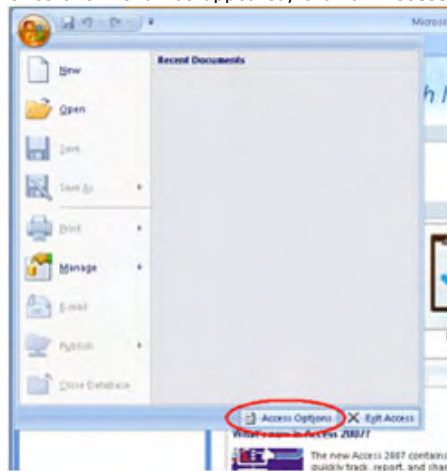
2. When you are in the folder, use the up and down arrow keys to highlight BERT in the folder. Next, click on the BERT program while holding the "Shift" key.



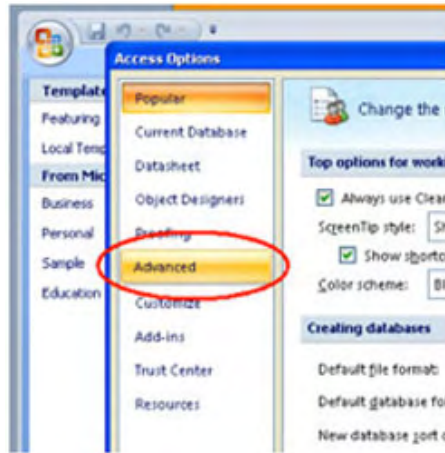
3. The BERT tool should open in a view similar to this. Next, **Click the circle on the upper left corner of the screen.**



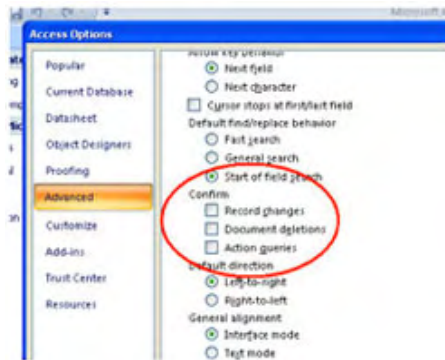
4. Once this menu has appeared, click on **Access Options** at the bottom.



5. In **Access Options**, you will find an option called **Advanced** in the left margin. Click this option.



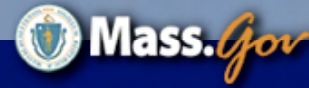
6. In **Advanced**, scroll down to the section called **Confirm**. Under this heading you will see Record Changes, Document Deletions and Action Queries. Make sure that these three boxes are empty and **NOT** checked.



7. Now press **OK** at the bottom of the screen, and exit out of Access completely. The next time you open BERT, the unnecessary pop-up messages will not appear.

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[3.1 Using BERT to make sure that your vendor-supplied or other software file complies with MTRS standards](#)

[3.2 Create an MTRS report record-by-record](#)

[3.3 Create an MTRS report by loading an existing file into BERT](#)

3.1 Using BERT to make sure that your vendor-supplied or other software file complies with MTRS standards

Massachusetts school districts are required to withhold MTRS deductions from eligible employees and submit those deductions with an electronic text-formatted report due on the 10th of every month. The main purpose of BERT is to enable you to comply with MTRS reporting requirements by allowing you to:

- **import** a file that was created with your payroll software;
- **confirm** that you are submitting the correct payment amount (in other words, that what BERT indicates as your file total amount is what you are sending as your actual payment); and
- **test** the data and fix any errors *before* you submit your report to the MTRS.

Tip: For a step-by-step guide to importing a file, see [section 6.1, Ten steps to BERT success](#).

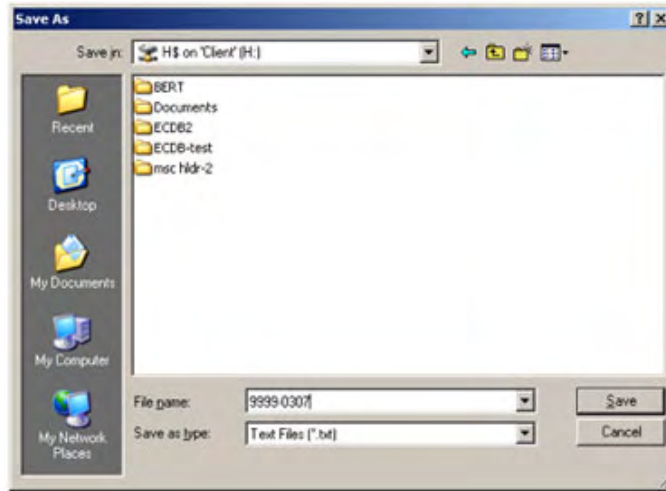
3.2 Create an MTRS report record-by-record

To create a report by entering individual records, simply open BERT and, from the blank main screen, choose "Add a Record" and begin entering your information. For a detailed explanation of how the Edit record screen works or for a definition of any of the fields on that screen, see [section 4.2](#).

After you have finished entering your data, you can export the report by clicking on "Export MTRS File" on the main screen. To export your file in the required MTRS report format, click the "Export MTRS File" button on the main menu screen. A "Save As..." interface will appear which will allow you to name the text file and select where to save it. Below is an example of a file being saved as 9999-0307 (district 9999 March 2007 report) on a local drive labeled **(H:)**.

Note

In order to easily identify files in the future, we suggest that you adopt a standard file-naming convention. For example, your district's 4-digit agency code followed by the month and year of the report. Using this rule, Abington Public Schools' December 2007 file would be saved as 0100122007, or maybe 0100-12-2007 for Abington Public Schools (0100) December (12) year (2007).



Reminder: The MTRS recommends that you maintain electronic copies of your deduction reports for at least 24 months in case there is a need to re-evaluate or reproduce the data.

3.3 Create an MTRS report by loading an existing file into BERT

BERT will allow a user to import a file, and then make changes to records globally or to individual records.

To create a report by loading an existing file into BERT, choose "File Changes," browse to your file and choose "Import MTRS File."

Note

Only text (*.txt) files can be imported into BERT 2.1. If you need to convert a file to a text file, open it in MS WORDPAD and use the "Save as" function to save the file on your computer as a text file.

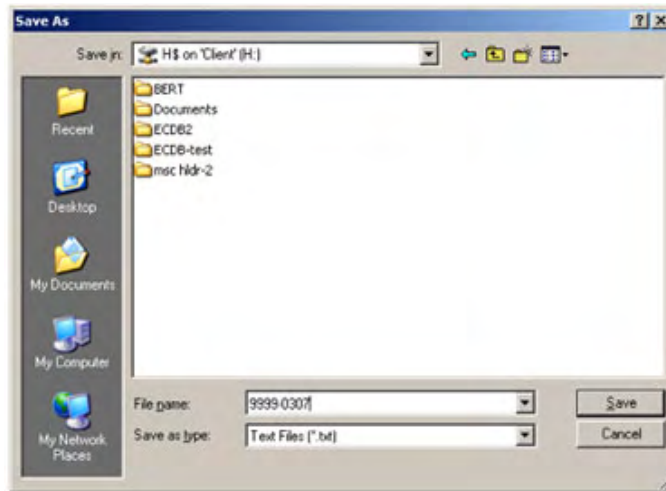
The File Changes screen allows you to modify, delete or create a set of records globally, in a single operation, rather than individually. Now that you have records in BERT, you may want to take advantage of some of the features available on the "File Changes" screen such as:

- changing the pay date on all of your records,
- copying an entire pay date,
- deleting an entire pay date,
- removing all blank records, and
- removing Adjustment and Retroactive Records.

Once you have finished entering your data, you can export the report by clicking on "Export MTRS File" on the main screen. To export your file in the format needed to report to the MTRS, click the "Export MTRS File" button on the main menu screen. A "Save As..." interface will appear which will allow you to name the text file and select where to save it. Below is an example of a file being saved as 9999-0307 (district 9999 March 2007 report) on a local drive labeled (H:).

Note

In order to easily identify files in the future, we suggest that you adopt a standard file-naming convention. For example, your district's 4-digit agency code followed by the month and year of the report. Using this rule, Abington Public Schools' December 2007 file would be saved as 0100122007 or maybe 0100-12-2007 for Abington Public Schools (0100) December (12) year (2007).



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BERT 2.1 User Guide

PART 4

BERT 2.1 screen guide

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4.1 Main screen

Pay Date	SSN	Name	Regular Deduction	2% Deduction	Installment Deduction	Record Type
3/12/2010	111-22-3333	APPLE, AMY	190.79	25.39	0.00	N
3/26/2010	111-22-3333	APPLE, AMY	190.79	25.39	0.00	N
3/12/2010	111-22-3333	GEORGE, AL	96.30	0.00	0.00	N
3/26/2010	111-22-3333	GEORGE, AL	96.30	0.00	0.00	N
3/12/2010	123-45-6789	GEOGRAPHY, GEOFF	31.93	0.00	0.00	N
3/26/2010	123-45-6789	GEOGRAPHY, GEOFF	31.93	0.00	0.00	N
3/12/2010	555-66-7777	MATH, MARY T.	184.05	22.94	0.00	N
3/26/2010	555-66-7777	MATH, MARY T.	184.05	22.94	0.00	N
3/12/2010	333-22-4444	SCIENCE, SARAH	221.87	0.00	0.00	N
3/26/2010	333-22-4444	SCIENCE, SARAH	221.87	0.00	0.00	N

Regular Deduction: 1,456.04
Additional 2%: 96.42
Installment: 0.00
File Total: 1,552.46

The main menu screen has four sections:

1. the record base,
2. the search box,
3. the running totals box, and
4. the eight action buttons.

The record base

When BERT 2.1 is initially installed, no records will display on the screen. After you have populated the BERT 2.1 database with your records, they will appear on the main menu screen listed alphabetically by last name. To open an individual member's record, double click on either a name or SSN and the record modification screen will appear showing the details for that record.

The search box

The search box enables you to search for a particular record by entering either the entire SSN or any string of characters in the name box. After a search is complete, the main menu screen will display only the records found during the search. **You must hit the reset button in order to view all the records**

again but you can search for another record without hitting reset between searches.

Note

It is not necessary to differentiate between a first and last name during a name search. When a string is entered into the name search box, BERT 2.1 will search the database for any occurrence of that string both as a first name and a last name.

The running totals display

This provides you with deduction totals in the various categories and the grand total for the file. The deduction totals are recalculated whenever the deduction amounts in a record are modified, the search box is reset, or when a record is deleted.

Note

Check your balance: Start by comparing the balance of your file in BERT (displays on the bottom right hand corner of the **Main screen**) against your paper report totals and your payment. If there is a difference (variance) you may want to export the file in BERT either to Excel or a paper report to check against your vendor's paper report. See [Export MTRS File](#), below, for details on how to export data from BERT.

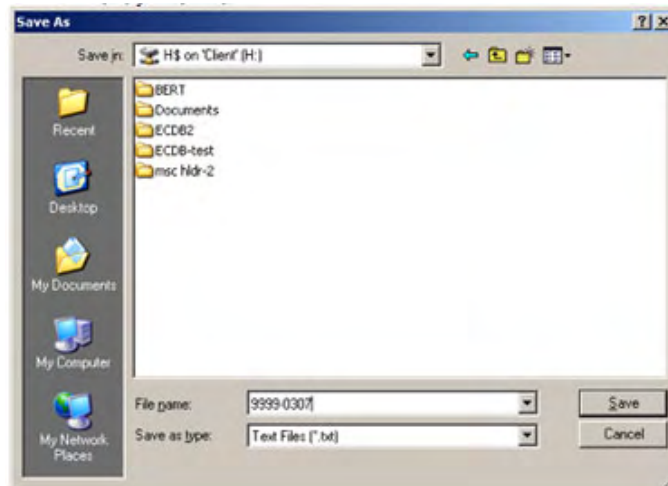
The eight action buttons

The Main screen has eight action buttons that initiate various BERT 2.1 functions.

1. **Add a Record:** This opens the Record modification screen in add mode, allowing you to add a record to your report. For a detailed explanation of this screen, please see [section 4.2](#).
2. **File Changes:** This opens the File Changes screen where you can use the functions that make changes globally. For a detailed explanation of this screen, please see [section 4.4](#).
3. **Export MTRS File:** This is the button that you use to export your monthly deduction report data to an MTRS-compliant text file that you save to your computer, a diskette or CD. A "Save As..." interface will appear which will allow you to name the text file and select where to save it. Below is an example of a file being saved as 9999-0307 (district 9999 March 2007 report) on a local drive labeled **(H:)**.

Note

In order to easily identify files in the future, we suggest that you adopt a standard file-naming convention. For example, your district's 4-digit agency code followed by the month and year of the report. Using this rule, Abington Public Schools' December 2007 file would be saved **as** 0100122007 or maybe 0100-12-2007 for Abington Public Schools (0100) December (12) year (2007).



Reminder: The MTRS recommends that you maintain electronic copies of your deduction reports for at least 24 months in case there is a need to re-evaluate or reproduce the data.

4. **Export to Excel:** BERT 2.1 enables you to export financial data to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, allowing you to easily view and manipulate your data. When you click the Export to Excel button, a "Save As..." screen interface will appear that will allow you to name the Excel file and select where to save it.

5. **Export Addresses:** BERT 2.1 enables you to create a list of names and addresses of all employees in the BERT report; this can be used for a mailing list or for other purposes. When you click the Export Addresses button, a "Save As..." screen will appear that will allow you to name the Excel file and select where to save it.
6. **Paper Report:** This creates report output that can be printed (hard copy) or saved as a file. For a detailed explanation of this function, please see [section 4.5](#).
7. **Export Error Report:** BERT 2.1 enables you to test your report data for the presence of common data quality deficiencies before sending the file to the MTRS. You can then make corrections to the deduction report **before** submitting it to the MTRS. When you click the Export Error Report button, a "Save As..." screen interface will appear that will allow you to name the Excel file and select where to save it. We recommend that you save the file to your desktop so you can retrieve it quickly. After any errors are corrected, you can drag the original error report file into your recycling bin and run the report again to make sure your report is clean. BERT will not catch every error it is possible to make, but it will catch the most common errors.

For a detailed explanation of the errors that BERT identifies and guidance on what steps to take when you run into a certain error, please see [section 6.2](#).

8. **Exit BERT:** This will exit the application and close your MS Access session.

4.2 Edit record screen

The Edit record screen allows you to add, change and delete individual records in the database. The Edit record screen for an existing record is accessed by clicking on the name or SSN field of any member record from the Main screen. A user can access this screen to add a member's record by clicking on the "add a record" button on the main screen. This screen also displays all of the details contained in a member's record as required by the MTRS file layout specifications. For an explanation of the MTRS file requirements, please see the [MTRS Earnings and Contribution Report File Layout](#).

Note

If you are adding an Adjustment or Retroactive record, there are additional requirements covered in [section 4.3](#).

Note

All of the fields on this screen must be filled out before a record can be successfully saved.

MTRS - BERT 2.1(a)
Edit record page

Record Type: Pay Date (MM/DD/YYYY): 3/12/2010 Report Month (YYYYMM): 201003

Name (Last, First MI): APPLE, AMY SSN: 111-22-3333 District: 9999

Earnings Data		Deduction Data	
Base Earnings	2,422.30	Member Rate	00
Coaching Earnings	0.00	Regular Deduction	193.79
Rates Earnings	0.00	2% Deduction	25.37
Longevity Earnings	0.00	Installment Deduction	0.00
Stipend Earnings	0.00		
Premium Earnings	0.00		
Ineligible Earnings	0.00		

Contract Data

FTE Annual Salary: 62902 Contract Term: 10 (Number of months required to work per year)

Fulltime/PT%: 100 Pay Frequency: 50 (Number of pay dates in yearly pay schedule)

Position Code: TEACH Pay Duration: 12 (Number of months in which employee is paid)

Address Information

Atr:

Street: 108 CANAL ST.

City: BOSTON State: MA Zip: 02114

Buttons: Save and Validate, Add Adjustment Record, Delete Record, Close Without Validation

The record modification screen has six sections:

1. record identification data,
2. earnings data,
3. rate and deduction data,
4. contract data,
5. member address information, and
6. action buttons.

Record identification data: This group of fields identifies the member and the period being reported. This section contains the record type, the record pay date, the reporting period (Report Month), the member's name, the member's SSN, and the school district's 4-digit MTRS identification number.

Earnings data: The MTRS requires reported earnings to be distributed among six eligible earnings categories. An additional category is provided to report ineligible earnings (any earnings the member receives in the reporting period that are not considered pensionable). If a payment matches the description of more than one earnings type, the user should choose the category that most closely represents the type of reported pay. For example, if a teacher is paid a stipend for coaching, those earnings should be reported as **coaching** earnings rather than as a **stipend**. If you have a payment that you do not know how to classify, please consult your MTRS district representative.

Rate and deduction data: MTRS members are subject to three types of deductions:

1. regular deductions,
2. 2% deductions, and
3. installment payments.

Each of those deductions is listed separately on the MTRS report and is subject to distinct rules regarding whether they are subject to retirement deductions. For information on how to establish a member's rate, please see our [Employer homepage](#) and look under the Training and reference info section.

Note

The MTRS does not currently accept deductions in the installment payment field. This field is reserved for future use.

Contract data: This section of the screen has the member's employment data. The MTRS uses this data to validate the salary information being reported, to establish your employee's salary average, and to assign creditable service to your employees.

- **FTE annual salary:** The annual contractual salary should be listed as the full-time equivalent for part-time members. It should not be the pro-rated actual salary being paid. This is the base salary derived from the member's contract or the pay schedule in the collective bargaining agreement. The annual salary does not include additional types of pay such as coaching pay, stipends or longevity bonus.
- **Full-time/PT%:** The full-time status must be listed as a whole number percentage, not as a decimal. For example, a half-time teacher would be coded as "50", not ".5", "50%" or ".50".
- **Position code:** There are twenty valid MTRS report position codes:
 1. ADJUST – School Adjustment Counselor
 2. ADMIN – Code for administrator positions not otherwise listed
 3. ASPRIN – Assistant Principal
 4. ASUPT – Assistant Superintendent
 5. COACH – Coach
 6. COLDIR – Collaborative School Director
 7. GUIDE – Guidance Counselor
 8. KINDER – Kindergarten Teacher
 9. LEADER – Charter School Leader
 10. LIBRA – Librarian
 11. NURSE – School Nurse
 12. OT – Occupational Therapist
 13. OTHER – This code should be used in rare cases where a member's position title does not correspond to one of the defined codes
 14. PRIN – Principal
 15. PSYCH – Psychiatrist or Psychologist
 16. PT – Physical Therapist
 17. SOCIAL – School Social Worker
 18. SPEECH – Speech and Language Therapist
 19. SUPT – Superintendent
 20. TEACH – Teacher
- **Contract term** is the number of months per year that a member must work to earn his or her base annual salary. The typical teacher is contractually required to work 10 months (September – June); therefore one month of employment equals 1/10 of a year of retirement service credit. Please set the contract term to "HR" for any eligible hourly employee with an irregular schedule or that is not entitled to sick or vacation pay.
- **Pay frequency** refers to the schedule on which a member is paid. For example, a member paid bi-weekly over 12 months would have a pay frequency of "26" because that is the number of pay dates in the contract year.
- **Pay duration** is the number of months over which the base salary is paid. For example, a member paid from September through August would be assigned a pay duration factor of "12"; someone who receives his or her salary for the summer months as a June lump-sum payment would be reported with a pay duration of "LS".

Member Address Information: The member's home mailing address is required on your MTRS report. The member's home address is broken into 5 fields and is required on all records including retroactive and adjustment records.

Note

Remember to update your payroll database when an employee reports

an address change. If BERT is your primary reporting tool, please be sure to maintain the address information in BERT as well.

Action buttons: These buttons are used to:

- save and validate that all of the data in a record is in the correct format
- delete a record from the file
- add an adjustment record for the member whose record you have open or
- close a record without saving the input.

4.3 Special instructions for Retroactive and Adjustment records

Adjustment and retroactive records have specific requirements and, depending on your vendor software, may have to be added manually.

A **retroactive** active record may be required for a retiree or former member if, for example, a settlement requires a retroactive payment to be made to a former employee. If a retroactive record is required, payments made to members must be reported in the "Retro earnings" field. The pay date should reflect the actual pay date and the reporting period should reflect the earliest period covered by the retro payment.

Note

The "**Report month**" for a retroactive record should reflect the first month in the span of time that the retroactive payment covers.

An **adjustment** record separate from the normal deduction record should be reported when an adjustment is made to an individual's record. This type of record is used to report an adjustment to previously reported pay. For example, an adjustment record might be necessary when an unpaid sick day requires the user to create a negative entry to adjust the base pay received for a previous pay date. An adjustment record may also be used to report a deduction for a stipend paid in a previous reporting period for which no deduction was reported at that time.

Note

With BERT_2.1a you can create an adjustment record easily using fewer key strokes. In order to add an adjustment record for a member with an existing record, you can limit your data input by clicking on "**add adjustment record**" on the bottom of the Edit Record page of the member account you are adjusting. (available with BERT_2.1a) This function creates an additional adjustment record with the same pay date and period date as the original, sets the record type to "A" and sets the earnings and deduction fields to zero.

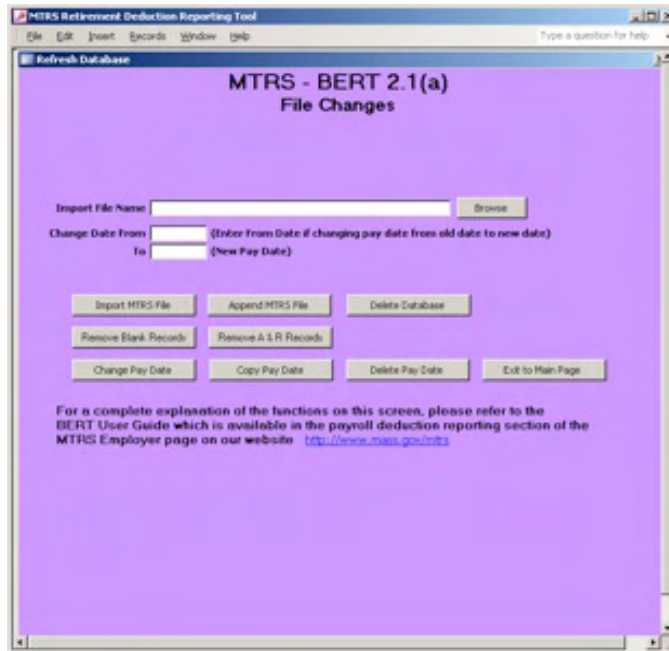
Note

The "**Report month**" for an adjustment record must match the month of the transaction being corrected. If the correction is for pay covering more than one period, it must reflect the first month that the adjustment is correcting.

4.4 File Changes screen

The File Changes screen allows you to modify, delete or create a set of records globally and in a single operation rather than individually.

This section will describe the functions located on the File Changes screen.



Import MTRS File: This button activates the function that allows you to import a text file obtained from the MTRS or a locally saved text file created for a previous reporting period to populate the BERT 2.1a database. An imported file will overwrite any previously existing records in your database. This is the principal method that you will use to make corrections to your report files.

To import a file:

1. On the File Changes screen, click **Browse** to find your deduction report on your computer or disk. Once you have located your file, click **Open**.
2. Now that your file name appears in the "Import File Name", click on **Import MTRS File** and click "OK" on the confirmation messages. To view your new file, click **Exit to main page** on the bottom right corner of the File changes screen. **Note:** Only text (*.txt) files can be imported into BERT 2.1a. If you need to convert a file into a text file, open it in MS WORDPAD or NOTEPAD and use the "Save As..." function to save the file on your computer as a text file.

Append MTRS File: This button works exactly like the Import MTRS File button, but it does not delete the existing database in BERT during the process, allowing you to combine separate files into a single BERT database. To append a file, follow the import instructions above.

Delete Database: This button will delete all of your records in BERT 2.1.

Remove Blank Records: This button will delete any records in your database without eligible earnings or deductions.

Remove A & R Records: This button will delete all of the Adjustment and Retroactive records from BERT 2.1 while keeping all of the normal records intact.

Change Pay Date: This function enables you to globally change the pay date for all records with a given pay date. For example, if you created your database by importing a September file to serve as the basis for an October report, this function allows you to globally change the September pay date(s) to the corresponding October pay date(s) in one easy step.

Note

Be sure to fill both the **Change Date From** and **To** fields with dates.

Copy Pay Date: This function allows you to create an additional pay date in a file by copying an existing pay date and globally updating your file. This is a key function for a district that uses BERT as a primary reporting tool and regularly reports multiple pay dates in a single file.

Note

Be sure to fill both the **Change Date From** and **To** fields with dates.

Delete Pay Date: This function allows you to globally delete all records with a certain pay date. You will primarily use this when creating a report for a two-pay-period month (whereas the previous report was for a three-pay-period month).

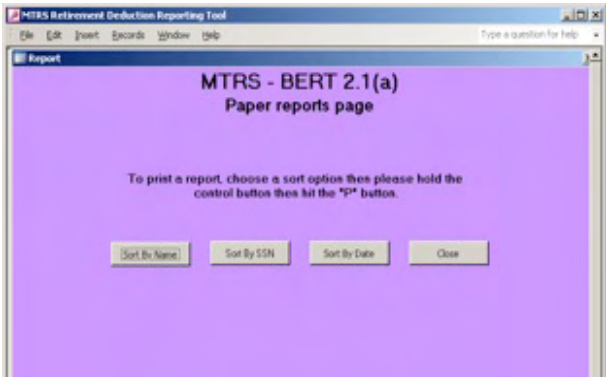
Note

Be sure to enter the existing date that you want to delete in the **Change Date From** field.

Exit to main screen: Select this button to return to the main menu screen.

4.5 Paper report screen

BERT 2.1 also has the ability to create a “hard copy,” or paper version, of your report that can be sorted by Social Security number, name or pay date. **You are not required to send the paper report with your diskette or CD to the MTRS.** To create a paper report, click the “Paper Report” button on the main menu screen.



A screen will appear where the user can create a report sorted by SSN, name or pay date. There is also a button that will allow the user to close the menu and return to the main menu screen without printing a report. Select a printing option, then when the report screen appears, print by holding the “Ctrl” key and hitting the “P” key (or save to the directory of your choice by holding the “Ctrl” key and hitting the “S” key).

Here is an example of a paper report sorted by SSN:

Pay Date	SSN	Name	Eligible Earnings	Regular Deduction	2% Involuntary Deduction	2% Involuntary Deduction
3/06/2007	111-22-3333	APPLE, JAMIE	7,267.15	581.37	76.15	0.00
3/06/2007	111-22-3333	GERBA, AL	6,762.62	269.13	0.00	0.00
3/06/2007	555-66-7777	MATH, MARY E	6,501.85	552.15	66.81	0.00
3/06/2007	123-45-6789	PLANT, ROBERT	3,831.91	191.59	0.00	0.00
3/06/2007	333-22-4444	SCIENCE, SARAH	6,000.00	302.54	0.00	0.00
Total Records: 5			Total Deductions: 2,001.70			

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BERT 2.1 User Guide

PART 5

Questions and technical assistance

[5.1 Contacting the MTRS for support](#)

[5.2 Frequently asked questions](#)

5.1 Contacting the MTRS for support

If you have any problems either installing BERT 2.1 or using the program, please:

- contact [your MTRS Employer Service Representative](#),
- call the Employer Services helpline at 617-679-6895, or
- send an e-mail to bertsupport@trb.state.ma.us.

5.2 Frequently asked questions

What has changed from BERT 2.1 to BERT 2.1a?

BERT 2.1a features two new functions that allow you to:

- create adjustment records more easily, and
- append separate files in order to include multiple pay dates on a single disk.

These new functions are explained sections [4.2](#) and [4.4](#) of this user manual. If you are using BERT 2.1, there is no MTRS requirement to switch to BERT 2.1a; however, the two new functions may make reporting to the MTRS easier for you.

We've never used BERT. Do we need to start now?

Yes. The MTRS is now strongly recommending that all school districts use BERT to test their MTRS reports for errors before submitting them for processing. BERT includes an easy-to-use and comprehensive error reporting feature so you can check your reports right on your desktop. It is your data; please make sure it is accurate. By detecting and correcting problems prior to submittal, you will allow the MTRS to post your reports sooner and provide benefits to your employees in a more efficient and timely manner.

We are currently using BERT 2.1 successfully. Do we need to upgrade to BERT 2.1a?

No—if you are NOT encountering the reporting issues listed below, you do not need to upgrade your BERT 2.1 to BERT 2.1a. However, there is no disadvantage to using BERT 2.1a—it works exactly like the previous version and the two new functions may make reporting to the MTRS quicker and easier for you.

- Invalid base-to-earnings errors for 12-month employees paid using an "exact pay method" that calculates a fractional pay frequency, such as 26.1 or 52.2, that cannot be reported as a decimalized value.
- Invalid base-to-earnings errors for employees with fractional full-time percentages, such as 67.66%, which cannot be reported as a decimalized value using the current file format.
- Excess base salary-to-reported-earnings errors for employees due to district-wide furloughs.
- Inability to add adjustment records to properly report account adjustments made via payroll.
- Inability to append, or combine, separate text files in order to compile a single MTRS report.

We are using BERT 1.0 or BERT 2.0. Do we need to upgrade to BERT 2.1a?

Yes. We received valuable feedback from school district administrators on our two previous releases, and this new version offers an enhanced version of a significant and very helpful feature of BERT 2.0: an error report generation function that allows users to test their reports BEFORE submitting them to us.

Will my old files be compatible with this new version?

Absolutely—not only are your old BERT files compatible, your old AutoReport files are compatible, and, if you are using a payroll vendor that produces an MTRS file for you, those files are also compatible.

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Whom do I contact for support?

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- contact your [MTRS Employer Service Representative](#),
- call the Employer Services helpline at 617-679-6895, or
- send an e-mail to bertsupport@trb.state.ma.us .

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PART 6

Appendixes

[6.1 Ten steps to BERT success](#)

[6.2 BERT 2.1 error messages, definitions and what to do](#)

[6.3 Tips for using Microsoft Excel to view and analyze your BERT data](#)

6.1 Ten steps to BERT success

Below is a ten-step reference guide that will quickly lead you through testing and correcting a monthly MTRS deduction report and be in compliance with MTRS reporting standards.

1. **Locate the MTRS deduction report file** you would normally send to the MTRS.
2. **Make sure it is a text file.** Text files are recognized by the "*.txt" file extension in the file name. If it is not a text file, right click on the file, and rename it "reportmonth.txt". Make sure there is only one ".txt" in the file name.
3. Open BERT 2.1 and **click on the "File Changes"** button, then select "Browse" and locate the text file.
4. Once the file is selected, click "Import MTRS File" and then "OK," and then "OK" again to confirm that the file has been imported. Then click "Exit to Main Page." Your new file should appear on the Main screen. **Check the Pay date column on the left** to be sure that you have imported the correct file. For more details on importing files, see [section 4.4](#).
5. **Check the "File Total"** on the bottom right of the Main screen and verify that it matches your report payment total. For more information on the Main screen, see [section 4.1](#).
6. Test your file by clicking the **"Export Error Report"** button on the Main screen and saving the error report to your desktop (for example, as "Aug2009BERTerrorReport.xls"). The error report will be in Microsoft Excel format; for tips on how to use Excel to sort or manage your error report, see [section 6.3](#).
7. **Open the error report** that you just saved and if there are no errors, your original file can be sent to the MTRS. If you have errors, fix them either in BERT or in your system (sometimes it's more efficient to delete the BERT file, fix the errors in your system and import them into BERT all over again). For an explanation of the error messages, see [section 6.2](#).
8. If you have changed the file in BERT, **repeat step 6 and step 7**.
9. **If you have changed anything in BERT**, export your file from BERT by clicking **"Export MTRS file."** Then save two copies: one to send to the MTRS and a corrected backup copy for your files. Please add either "Fixed in BERT" or a "c" to the name of the file you save for your records so you know it has already been corrected. **Note:** if you saved your original file to a CD, you probably will need a new CD because you can only save a file on a CD-R once.
10. **Exit BERT** from the main screen.

6.2 BERT 2.1 error messages, definitions and what to do

Error message:	2% ded. is calculated wrong or record has bad data
What it means:	BERT has calculated the 2% figure according to the data in your record and the calculated amount does not match your deduction.
What to do:	Please make sure all the contract data in the "Edit Record Page" is correct. If all of your contract data is correct, verify that your payroll software is calculating the 2% deduction properly. If it isn't, get it corrected. Please note: Once the 2% is being taken properly, please contact your Employer Services Representative and arrange to

make an adjustment for the next pay period through your payroll system to correct the error. This correction should be reported as an adjustment record.

Error message: **2% deduction invalid**

What it means: The value in the 2% field is either blank or non-numeric.

What to do: Check the 2% deduction and change the blank or non-numeric value in BERT to the proper 2%. Please enter 0.00 if no 2% deduction was taken.

Error message: **2% deduction is missing**

What it means: This error will appear for any 8% or 9% member who is listed as full-time with a salary of more than \$30,000 but did not have a 2% deduction taken.

What to do: Check this member's record to make sure the proper rate is really 8% or 9% and that the member earns enough to require a 2% deduction. If this member is not having 2% deducted in error, please start taking the 2% deduction in the next payroll cycle.

Please note: Once the 2% is being taken properly, please contact your [Employer Services Representative](#) and arrange to make an adjustment for the next pay period through your payroll system to correct the error. This correction should be reported as an adjustment record.

Error message: **2% deduction is negative**

What it means: BERT has detected a negative deduction in the 2% field.

What to do: Look at the record to see why the amount is negative. All corrections should be submitted in adjustment records. If this negative amount is a result of an adjustment, please make sure you are reporting it as an adjustment record. If this record is reported as a normal record but should be an adjustment, change the record type from N to A at the top of the **Edit Record Page**.

Error message: **2% deduction taken in error**

What it means: BERT has detected a record with a member rate code of 05 or 11 that had a 2% deduction taken.

What to do: Please verify that the member's rate code is correct and if this is an actual error, stop taking 2% deductions in your next payroll cycle.

Please note: After the erroneous 2% deduction has been stopped, please contact your [Employer Services Representative](#) and arrange to make an adjustment for the next pay period through your payroll system to correct the error. This correction should be reported as an adjustment record.

Error message: **50% full-time record detected, check annual salary**

What it means: BERT has detected a member who is listed as a part-time member at 50%.

What to do: Please ensure that the full-time equivalent annual salary and the rest of the contract data is correct.

Error message: **Adjustment record detected**

What it means: BERT has detected an adjustment record in the file that you have sent to fix a previous error.

What to do: Make sure this adjustment record is valid and that the MTRS receives an explanation for the adjustment.

Error message:	Agency code is invalid
What it means:	The four-digit agency code (example: 0100) is missing.
What to do:	Contact your payroll vendor and ask why the agency code is not showing up on the report. If you do not have a payroll vendor, please update your payroll system or manually change the records in BERT.
Error message:	Annual salary is invalid
What it means:	The annual salary cannot be blank, zero, or negative.
What to do:	Please update the annual salary in your payroll system, and make the correction in BERT. Be sure to enter the annual salary as the full-time equivalent salary for members starting mid-year and part-time employees.
Error message:	Base earnings do not match annual salary
What it means:	BERT has computed the base earnings using the annual salary and full-time percentage and the calculated figures don't match your figures.
What to do:	Make sure the annual salary and full-time percentage are reported correctly. If they are not, correct them in your payroll system and either generate a new text file from your payroll system or make the correction in BERT.
Error message:	City field is blank
What it means:	The city field cannot be blank for any records.
What to do:	Update the city field in your payroll system. If you are not generating a new text file from your payroll system, also make the correction in BERT.
Error message:	Contract term is invalid
What it means:	The value being reported is either blank, zero, or not a valid selection from the dropdown menu.
What to do:	Determine what the correct contract term is (number of months the employee is contractually required to work) and correct it in your payroll system. If you are not generating a new text file from your payroll system, also make the correction in BERT.
Error message:	Deduction does not match eligible earnings
What it means:	BERT has calculated your employee's regular deduction using the reported earnings and rate code in the record and it does not match the deduction you are reporting.
What to do:	Look at the member's record and make sure all the earnings and deductions match your payroll system. If the earnings or deduction data doesn't match your system, correct the errors and save your changes. If the amounts all match what is in your payroll system and this error is a real problem, please inform your Employer Services Representative. Note: Once the cause of this error has been fixed, please contact your Employer Services Representative and arrange to make an adjustment for the next pay period through your payroll system to correct the error. This correction should be reported as an adjustment record.
Error message:	Deduction without eligible earnings
What it means:	A deduction has been taken; however, no eligible earnings are listed on the report.

What to do:	Research your payroll system and, if eligible earnings are missing, add them to the record. If there are no eligible earnings because the deduction in the record was not taken from eligible compensation, please inform your Employer Services Representative. Please note: Once the cause of this error has been fixed, contact your Employer Services Representative and arrange to make an adjustment for the next pay period through your payroll system to correct the error. This correction should be reported as an adjustment record.
Error message:	Eligible coach earnings must be in coaching field
What it means:	The coach earnings are being reported in a field other than the coach earnings field (most likely the base earnings field).
What to do:	In BERT, move all coach earnings to the coaching field. Also, make sure to code the earnings correctly, so they appear in the correct field in future reports.
Error message:	Eligible earnings without a deduction
What it means:	Earnings are listed in the payroll record; however, it is showing no regular retirement deduction was taken.
What to do:	If this member should have had retirement contributions deducted and did not due to an error, contact your Employer Services Representative and discuss how to handle the correction. If this record pertains to someone who should not be making retirement contributions, such as a retired or substitute teacher, delete the record from the BERT file.
Error message:	FTE% of less than 50% may affect Member Eligibility for the MTRS
What it means:	This message is intended as an alert that the employee might not be eligible for MTRS membership.
What to do:	Determine whether the employee is working at another school district at the same time. If the combined FTE% between the school districts adds up to at least 50%, he or she is eligible and therefore leave the report as it is. If the person is found to be not eligible, contact your Employer Services Representative .
Error message:	Full-time percentage is not valid
What it means:	The full-time percentage is either blank, zero, or above 100%.
What to do:	Correct the full-time percentage in your payroll system and if you are not generating a new text file from your payroll system, also make the correction in BERT.
Error message:	Name field is blank
What it means:	There is no name listed on the deduction report record.
What to do:	Update your payroll system and if you are not generating a new text file from your payroll system, also make the correction in BERT.
Error message:	Name field must have one comma
What it means:	The information that you have listed in the name field is not in the proper format or is missing required information. The proper name format can be found in the MTRS Earnings and Contribution Report File Layout .
What to do:	Correct the manner in which you are reporting this name and either add or remove a comma as needed.

Error message:	Negative eligible earnings
What it means:	BERT has detected a negative value in an eligible earnings field.
What to do:	Examine the record in BERT and determine why the earnings are negative. All corrections should be submitted as adjustment records. If this negative amount is due to an adjustment, please make sure you are reporting it as an adjustment record. If this record is reported as a normal record but should be an adjustment, change the record type from N to A at the top of the Edit Record Page.
Error message:	Pay date and period date do not match
What it means:	The pay date and period being reported have different months. Example: pay date is 3/30/2009, and the period date is 200904 (April).
What to do:	Check your payroll system to see why the dates did not match. If this is a payroll software error, have your software corrected. This can be fixed in BERT on the individual member's Edit Record page, or globally, by clicking on the File Changes screen and changing the pay date, which will automatically fix the period date. If this error message appears because this record is being reported as a normal record but should be an adjustment or retro record, please change the record type from N to A or R at the top of the Edit Record Page.
Error message:	Pay duration and pay frequency are not compatible
What it means:	The pay duration and pay frequency are not a logical combination. Example of error: Pay frequency = 21 (bi-weekly over 10 months) Pay duration = 12 (12 months)
What to do:	Make the necessary changes in your payroll system and if you are not generating a new text file from your payroll system, also make the correction in BERT.
Error message:	Pay duration cannot be shorter than the contract term
What it means:	It is not logical for someone to work longer than the period of time in which they are being paid. Example of error: Contract term = 12 Pay duration = 10
What to do:	A teacher's contract term is usually 10 (working September through June) and an administrator's contract term is usually 12 (working the entire year). Review this employee's contract data in BERT and make the necessary changes in your payroll system. If you are not generating a new text file from your payroll system, also make the correction in BERT.
Error message:	Pay duration is invalid
What it means:	The pay duration is either blank, zero, or not listed under the valid pay duration dropdown menu.
What to do:	Correct the pay duration, both in your payroll system and in BERT. For a list of valid pay durations, click on the dropdown menu on the Edit Record page.
Error message:	Pay frequency is invalid

What it means:	The pay frequency is either blank, zero, or not listed under the valid pay frequency dropdown menu.
What to do:	Correct the pay duration, both in your payroll system and in BERT. For a list of valid pay frequencies, click on the dropdown menu on the edit record page.
<hr/>	
Error message:	Pay frequency is only valid for coaches
What it means:	Pay frequencies of 01, 02, 03, and 06 are only valid for coaches.
What to do:	If the person is a coach, change the position code to COACH in BERT. If not, correct the pay frequency in your payroll system and in BERT.
<hr/>	
Error message:	Pay period is not valid
What it means:	The pay period is either blank or in the wrong format. The correct format is yyyy-mm; for example, March 2009 should be 200903.
What to do:	Contact your payroll vendor and find out why the pay period is not being populated correctly. Make the necessary changes in your payroll system and if you are not generating a new text file from your payroll system, also make the correction in BERT.
<hr/>	
Error message:	Please verify data for hourly employee
What it means:	A record for an hourly employee is on the deduction report.
What to do:	Look at the record on the Edit Record Page and make sure all information is being reported correctly.
<hr/>	
Error message:	Position code is invalid
What it means:	The position code is either blank or has been entered incorrectly. The position code must be in caps and spelled correctly.
What to do:	Correct the position code in your payroll system as well as BERT. A list of valid position codes can be found by clicking on the position code dropdown menu in BERT or in the MTRS Earnings and Contribution Report File Layout .
<hr/>	
Error message:	Rate code is invalid
What it means:	The rate code is blank or not a valid code.
What to do:	Determine the member's correct contribution rate and update both your payroll system and BERT. In BERT, there is a dropdown with the valid entries: 05, 07, 08, 09, and 11.
<hr/>	
Error message:	Record has no earnings or deduction
What it means:	BERT has detected a record on the payroll report with all earnings and deductions reported as \$0.00. This error commonly appears in July and August for employees who received a lump-sum payment.
What to do:	If you have verified that this record should not be on the MTRS report, click on the "File Changes" button, and then click on the "Remove Blank Records" button. This will remove all the blank records, thus dealing with the condition that caused the error message. If this member should have had deductions, contact your Employer Services Representative .

Error message:	Regular deduction is invalid
What it means:	The deduction field is blank and is showing no value.
What to do:	Check your payroll records to determine what exactly was deducted. If nothing was deducted, change the deduction amount to zero in BERT. Contact your Employer Services Representative and discuss how to handle the correction.
Error message:	Regular deduction is negative
What it means:	BERT has detected a negative regular deduction.
What to do:	Examine the record and determine why the amount is negative. All corrections should be in adjustment records. If this negative amount is due to an adjustment, please make sure you are reporting it in an adjustment record. If this record is reported as a normal record but should be an adjustment, change the record type from N to A at the top of the Edit Record Page.
Error message:	Salary less than \$20,000
What it means:	There is a possibility the salary has been entered incorrectly, or the employee might not be eligible for MTRS membership. If this person is a coach, please change the position code to COACH.
What to do:	Check BERT to see if the salary listed is correct. If not, make the necessary changes. If this employee is eligible for MTRS membership and the full-time equivalent salary is really less than \$20,000, or if you determine that this employee is not really eligible for membership, contact your Employer Services Representative.
Error message:	SSN is invalid
What it means:	The Social Security number is either blank, all zeroes, or is an unlikely number, for example: 123-45-6789, or 111-11-1111.
What to do:	Make the correction in your payroll system, and the necessary change in BERT.
Error message:	State field is invalid
What it means:	The state abbreviation listed in the record is not one of the 50 states, or has been entered incorrectly.
What to do:	Please make the correction in your payroll system and the necessary change in BERT.
Error message:	Street address is blank
What it means:	The address listed in your payroll record is blank.
What to do:	If needed, add an address to your payroll system and if you are not generating a new text file from your payroll system, also make the correction in BERT.
Error message:	Transaction date is invalid
What it means:	The transaction date is either blank or all zeroes.
What to do:	This date should match the pay date of the transaction that you are reporting. Make the necessary changes in your payroll system and if you are not generating a new text file from your payroll system, also make the correction in BERT.

Error message:	Transaction type is invalid
What it means:	There can only be three types of transactions: N for Normal records, A for Adjustment records, and R for Retro records.
What to do:	Make the necessary changes in your payroll system and if you are not generating a new text file from your payroll system, open the Edit Record page in BERT and find out what transaction type is listed in the upper left hand corner. Choose the appropriate record type from the dropdown menu.

Error message:	Unauthorized installment payment received
What it means:	BERT has detected an installment payment. Installment payments are not currently allowed by the MTRS.
What to do:	If there is money being reported in the installment field, it is most likely due to an adjustment or retro payment. If the amount in the installment field is an adjustment, please report it in a separate adjustment record. If it is a retro payment, please: either create a separate retro record; or, add the amount of deductions you've reported in the "installment payment" field to the regular deductions (and 2% deduction if necessary), and list the associated earnings in the retro earnings field.

Error message:	Zip code is invalid
What it means:	The zip code is blank, all zeroes, or less than five digits.
What to do:	Make the correction in your payroll system and the necessary change in BERT.

6.3 Tips for using Microsoft Excel to view and analyze your BERT data

BERT has three functions that allow you to export data into Excel, where it can be used for various purposes. The most commonly used Excel export is the Export Error Report function so this section of the guide will walk you through a few tips to help you process your error report.

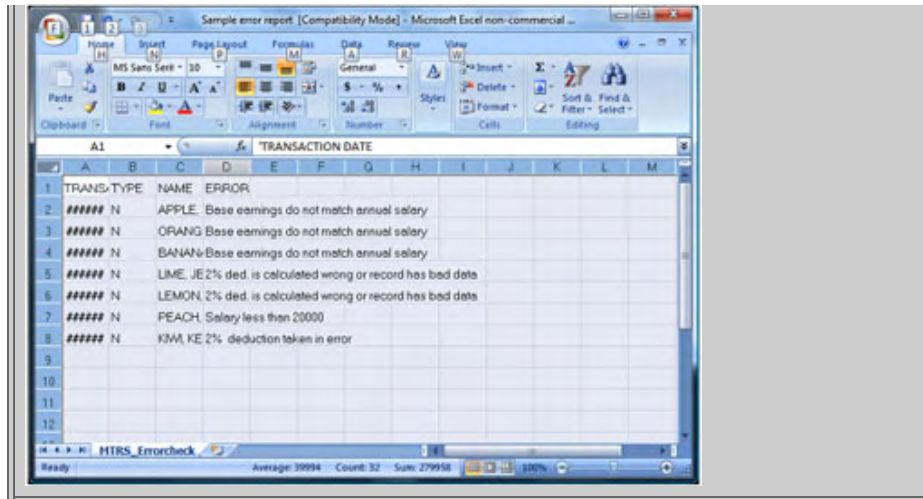
Microsoft Excel offers a variety of features that enable a user to do things like sort, format and find data. Before we cover some of those features, we thought it useful to review a few key terms.

Excel 101

Excel files are called either spreadsheets or workbooks. When you open an Excel workbook you default to looking at a worksheet. Each worksheet has a tab at the bottom of the page. Each square in a worksheet is called a cell and the cells are organized as rows and columns. A row is a set of cells on the same horizontal plane and each row is numbered on the left hand side of the worksheet. Columns are a set of vertically aligned rows. Each column of a worksheet is labeled with a letter. Every cell in a worksheet is named according to the corresponding column and row that it lives in. For example, the first cell in every worksheet is named cell A1 because it is in column A and Row 1.

A note about Excel 2007

A fairly recent release, Microsoft Excel 2007 has all of the features described below, but they may not be located in the same menus and toolbars where they were in previous versions of Excel. If you are using Excel 2007 and have difficulty finding a function, please either check Microsoft's website or contact your Employer Services Representative for assistance. Below is an illustration of the new "look and feel" of Microsoft Excel.



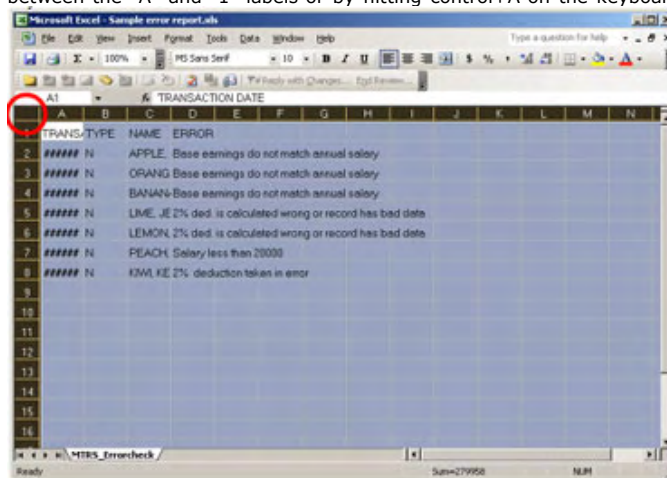
This section will offer tips to help you with the following functions in Excel:

- [Widening your columns](#)
- [Sorting your data](#)
- [Formatting your cells](#)
- [Finding specific data or a specific record](#)

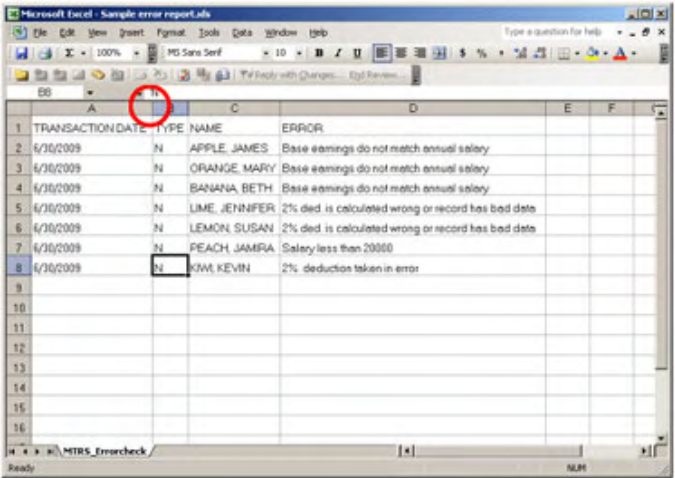
Widening your columns

When you first open an error report, you may find the data a little hard to read because the columns are not wide enough. To widen the columns follow these two steps:

1. Select all of the cells by clicking on the square in the top left-hand corner of the worksheet between the "A" and "1" labels or by hitting control+A on the keyboard.

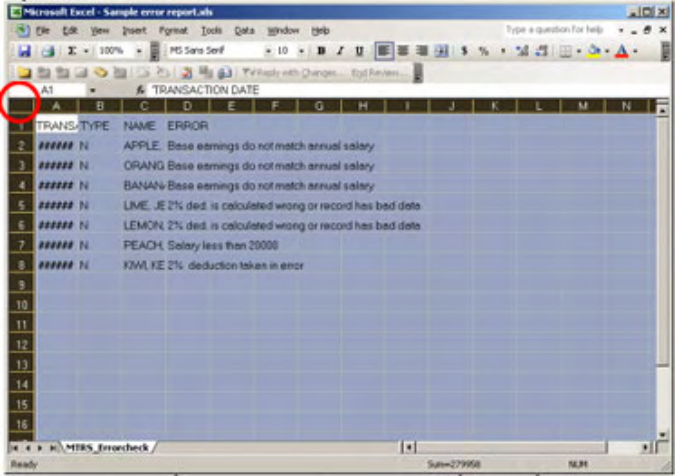


2. Once all of the cells are selected, simply click on the line between column label A and column label B (circled below) and Excel will resize all of your columns based on the widest value in each column. Your reformatted worksheet should now look like this:

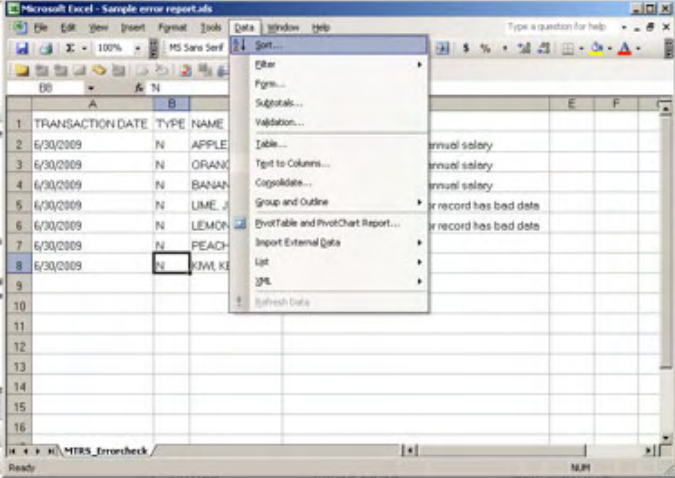


Sorting your data
Organizing your data can be a key step in analyzing and processing your report. To sort your data in a specific manner, follow these three steps:

- 1. Select all of the cells by clicking on the square in the top left-hand corner of the worksheet between the "A" and "1" labels or by hitting control+A on the keyboard.



- 2. Next, if you are using a pre-2007 version of Excel, go to Data in the top menu and choose Sort (see below). If you are using Excel 2007, go to Options in the menu and choose Sort.



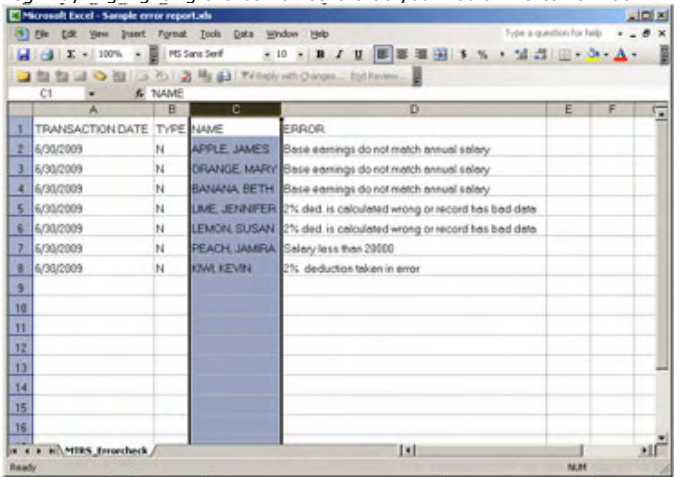
- 3. You can sort data in a worksheet by one column or several columns in the order of your choice. You can also choose to sort any list either in ascending (low to high) or descending (high to low) order.

Note
Make sure you select the header row option to keep your column names at the top of the list.



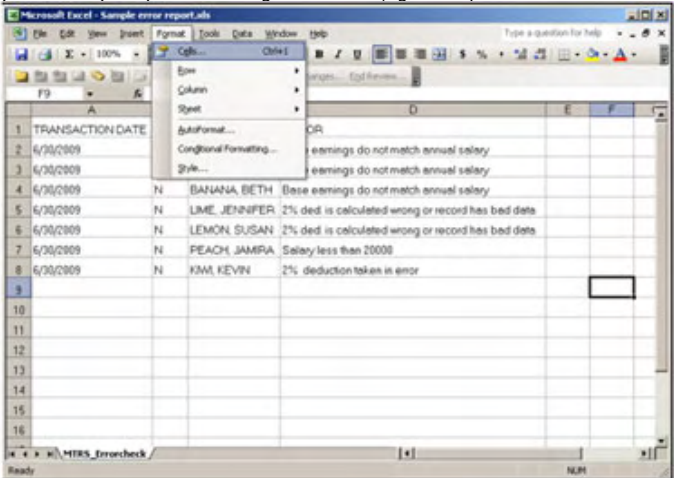
Formatting your cells
Information stored in Microsoft Excel can be displayed in a variety of formats, and you can use the formatting of this to make it easier to read and process your data. To set the format for any cell or group of cells in Excel, follow these three steps:

- 1. Begin by highlighting the cell or cells that you would like to format.



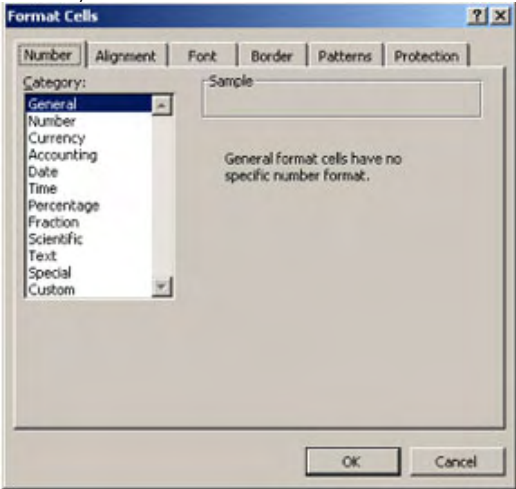
Tip: You can highlight a whole column or row in a worksheet by clicking on that column or row's corresponding letter or number label.

- 2. Next, if you are using a pre-2007 version of Excel, go to Format in the menu bar and choose Cells (see below). If you are using Excel 2007, go to Options in menu bar and choose Cells.



- 3. Once you are in the Format menu you will have several options to choose from, such as setting

the data in your cells to be right justified or formatting a column to hold a specific data type such as dates, text etc.

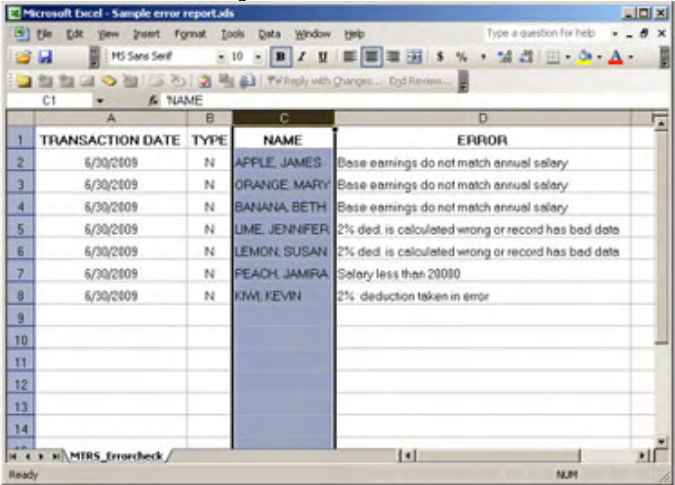


Finding specific data or a specific record

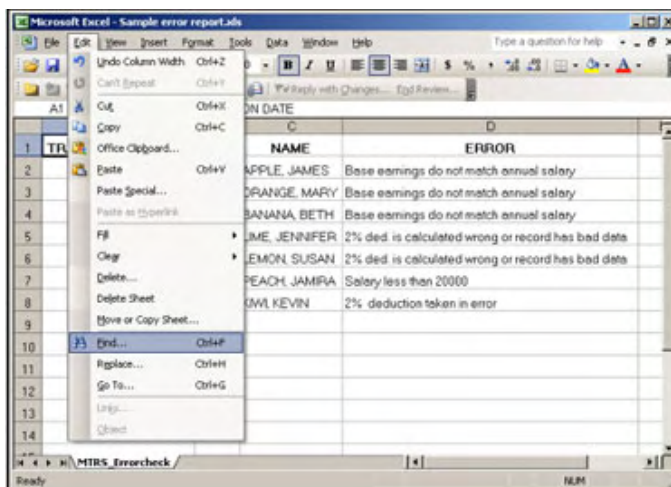
If you are dealing with a large spreadsheet, you may want to find a specific cell or value within a particular record (row) without having to scroll back and forth. You can use the Find function to search the entire sheet, or you can narrow the search by highlighting a specific column or row before searching.

To use the Find function to locate data:

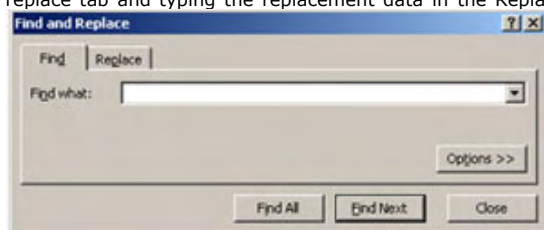
- 1. Start your search by choosing whether to search the entire sheet or a selected section. To search the entire sheet, select all of the cells by clicking on the square in the top left-hand corner of the worksheet between the "A" and "1" labels or by hitting control+A on the keyboard. Search a column or row by clicking on the column letter or row number. Below is an example of highlighting a column to search through.



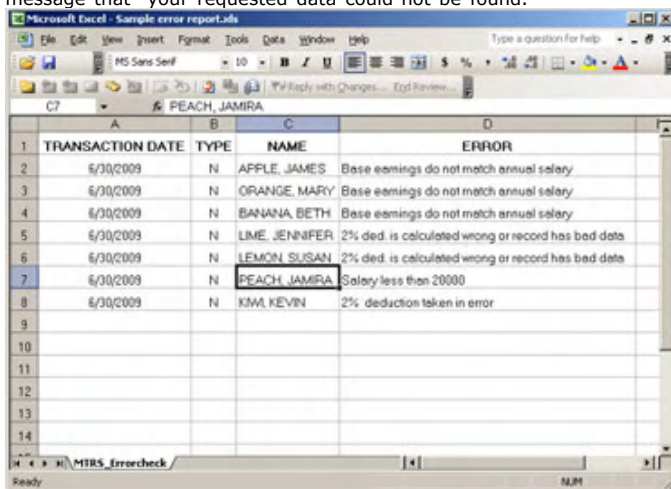
- 2. To find data in your selected range of cells, access the Find menu by either hitting control+F or by going to Edit from the top menu and selecting "Find."



3. When the Find box appears, enter any string of characters that you would like to locate in your selected cells and choose Find Next. You can also replace data with this function by choosing the replace tab and typing the replacement data in the Replace With box.



4. Excel will either highlight the first positive match and allow you to continue searching or display a message that "your requested data could not be found."



For complete information on using Microsoft Excel and all of the application's various options, visit [Microsoft's website](#).

Go to [BERT 2.1 User Guide](#)